

The 10 COBALT recommendations for an effective multi-stakeholder dialogue

Recommendations from the COBALT Closing Conference

Deliverable D4.3 of the COBALT project

Date: April 2015

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The context of the COBALT project

Fostering dialogue, building awareness and mutual learning in support of sustainable raw materials management in Europe were the focal points of the [COBALT](http://www.cobalt-fp7.eu/) project that ran from May 2013 to April 2015. Embedded in the political context of the Europe 2020 Strategy, the Raw Materials Initiative and the European Innovation Partnership on Raw Materials (EIP), COBALT has provided a valuable platform for involving stakeholders across the entire value chain of raw material supply and use, mainly business and industry (e.g. industry associations and SMEs), civil society organisations (CSOs, e.g. consumer associations and environmental NGOs), EU and national level policy makers, national geological surveys, and public and private research organisations.

Since raw materials management has implications for the regional, national and EU level, COBALT addressed the various levels of decision making and engagement with multiple stakeholder exchange and dialogue events at:

- *European level: 2 European conferences, 3 EU level dialogue meetings; Brussels*
- *Regional/national level: 3 regional level dialogue meetings (Copenhagen for the North Sea Region, Bucharest for Eastern Europe, and Madrid for the Iberian Peninsula)*

In these COBALT events, more than 340 participants from all over Europe attended (20% CSOs, 29% business/industry, 39% academia, and 12% policy making).

Conceptual development of the Recommendations

One of the objectives of the COBALT project was to elaborate, based on the various events and discussions across a multitude of stakeholders, a declaration on fostering sustainable raw material management along the value chain in Europe. This plan and potential options were discussed intensely with COBALT Advisory Board Members from relevant industry associations (Eurometaux, Euromines, IMA Europe and Umicore), Civil Society Organisations (Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future), Policy Making (EIP staff of DG GROW, previously DG ENTR) and Academia (EuroGeoSurveys).

Through these discussion it was agreed that instead of attempting to elaborate a declaration a set of recommendations could potentially provide better guidance to the European Commission on (1) formats, processes and needs for effective multi-stakeholder dialogue, and on (2) relevant issues in this complex thematic area that need further.

These recommendations were (i) based on the lessons learnt from previous COBALT findings, presented and discussed during the COBALT closing conference, and (ii) co-developed by participants through interactive group work and a reflecting panel discussion during COBALT closing conference.

This document provides the recommendations elaborated during the COBALT closing conference, based on insights and lessons learnt from all COBALT events and findings.

Purpose and target groups

The main purpose of the recommendations is to foster effective and open stakeholder dialogues and co-management processes in the wider context of the EIP objectives on sustainable raw materials management. It is targeting all interested stakeholders –business and industry, civil society organisations, EU and national level policy makers, national geological surveys, and public and private research organisations – who are committed to engage in stakeholder co-management processes.



The 10 COBALT recommendations for an effective multi-stakeholder dialogue

The COBALT dialogue events, and in particular the interactive group work during the closing conference, highlighted the following 10 *recommendations for effective multi-stakeholder dialogue* to enable progress on sustainable raw materials management:

1. Base discussions on dialogue, not on dogma

This necessitates creating a sense of common purpose and, as much as possible, finding a common language. Furthermore, committing to an open discourse is a crucial factor to establish a trusted (and protected, e.g. following Chatham House Rules) atmosphere in which dialogue can flourish.

2. Foster a culture of listening and mutual learning in dialogues

Dialogue participants should be open to new ideas and (diverging) views and be receptive to arguments, having trust that the others listen, too. This requires listening in a benevolent way, i.e. trying to have empathy for opposing positions, in order to bridge different agendas.

3. Provide appropriate formats, processes and settings for dialogue

Dialogue events need appropriate formats and setting for listening and mutual learning. Hence, the dialogue should allow all participants to express different views and perspectives in a cooperative and constructive way. Venue set-up should enable interactive exchange; a fixed chair and table set-up of dialogue meeting rooms limits opportunities for appropriate dialogue meetings. Institutional dialogues could be inspired by the COBALT experience to open the audience to stakeholders outside their usual circles.

4. Make the dialogue timely and allow for sufficient dialogue time

Engaging stakeholders into dialogue must start early on and sufficiently long before decisions need to be taken to enable inputs from various stakeholder perspectives to decision making processes. Dialogue processes need time to unfold dialogue potential and to enable working towards a decision.

5. Have a neutral facilitation body run the dialogues

As the stakes in sustainable raw materials management are diverse and often conflicting, dialogue processes should be as neutral as possible, aiming to balance the (time for) expression of existing goals and working towards joint solutions. There should be no need to arrive at unanimous agreement, but clear rules for listening, respectfulness and openness are key. An independent facilitation body, perceived as objective and unbiased by dialogue participants, and capable of managing diverse views is hence a prerequisite for effective dialogue.

6. Invite relevant dialogue participants using a value chain approach

Sufficient time is also needed to identify and invite the right dialogue participants. Using a “value chain approach” to identify and involve all relevant stakeholders (policy makers, industry, CSO, researchers) is a key to success. This may also require deciding on a sequenced process of

- a) inviting a wider spectrum of stakeholders for scoping relevant issues and serving the exchange of opinions; and
- b) inviting a selected set of stakeholders relevant to certain issues because they have the relevant understanding, knowledge, expertise or decision power in a more closed-shop event that allows them to also speak more openly.

In order to reach the people identified, it is important to use the right channels and language for invitation and also to consider who would be a trusted and credible source for sending out the invitations. In addition, enhancing capacities for CSOs to



join the dialogue are required, hence providing funding to attend the meetings in some cases is decisive.

7. Be clear on objectives and limits of dialogue upfront

Clarifying the dialogue objectives, the dialogue process, and possible outcomes of the dialogue early on is crucial. This will not only achieve clarity and establish trust, but will also help to avoid misunderstandings about what should, what can, and what cannot be achieved, and hence leave participants dissatisfied.

8. Keep the dialogue topics simple and relevant

Because of the complexity of sustainable raw materials management issues dialogue topics should be kept as locally relevant and as simple as possible to make the dialogue relevant and tangible for the target audiences. In order not to oversimplify, the translation to the specific context should be made and kept transparent throughout the dialogue so as to allow referring back to any potentially oversimplifying assumptions.

9. Build dialogue capacities to create a political and public debate

Ensuring sustainable access to raw materials as well as securing their sustainable supply and use is a key strategic issue for the EU. Hence more political and public dialogue at that level is essential. In this context, enhancing the attitudes and capacities of dialogue initiators for meaningful participation is needed, e.g. giving the dialogue the time to jointly develop appropriate rules and mechanisms. Discussions should be recorded and published (e.g. as policy briefs or summaries) to serve the public debate.

10. Make relevant information for the dialogue topic transparent and accessible

Dialogue discussions should make use of relevant existing information which should be made easily available and accessible. Such information should include material about current technical or other limitations, for example, the physical, technical and economic limitations to substitution or levels of recycling. Furthermore, uncertainties in data and information and associated risks need to be clearly expressed and their existence reflected by dialogue participants.

These principles have been tested and applied to the extent possible in the COBALT events, e.g. through applying interactive and inclusive formats that fostered a culture of listening and mutual learning as well as through having a neutral facilitator managing events.



Lessons learnt from COBALT dialogues

From the various COBALT dialogues the following lesson learnt themes emerged:

1. Dialogue is needed *along the entire raw materials value chain*;
2. Stakeholder exchange should be *fostered through interactive settings*;
3. Meaningful dialogue requires *participatory structures and commitment*.

1. Dialogue is needed along the entire raw materials value chain

The main thematic areas that emerged from the COBALT events as needing further dialogue are (1.1) sustainable primary raw material management, (1.2) sustainable secondary raw material management and a Circular Economy, and (1.3) eco-design.

1.1. Sustainable primary raw material management

Fostering sustainable primary raw material management requires addressing the three axes of mining operations sustainability: social, environmental and financial (see Fig. 1). Involving relevant stakeholders (such as authorities, companies, local communities) into dialogue is essential to improve or create the conditions for granting a 'social licence to operate' ⁽¹⁾. Here, dialogue is needed around the following issues:

- Reducing and mitigating potential adverse social and environmental impacts of mining operations;
- Fostering job creation along the minerals value chain;
- Codes of conduct for mining operations, e.g.
 - Supporting local community development through inclusion in decision making to create societal benefits at local scale (e.g. from royalties);
 - Ensuring transparency and information provision (through trusted sources);
- Bridging cultural divides and (re)building trust between companies, local communities and activists, requiring commitment for building mutual understanding of all stakeholders involved;
- Making best use of non-avoidable mining wastes (waste-to-products, zero discharge) towards re-use in quarry restoration and on new markets, and taking responsibility for safe disposal;
- Fostering awareness and mutual understanding through education, aiming at improving knowledge of the technological processes, necessities and limits of extraction. The [European Minerals Day](#) is a step in the right direction;
- Assessing the European mineral deposits of public importance and safeguarding these deposits through early, appropriate and inclusive land planning policies;
- Better harmonisation of mineral policies between Member States and at EU level;



Fig. 1: Targeting overall sustainable mining (Source: Holmström 2014)

¹ The social licence to operate (SLO) refers to the level of acceptance or approval by local communities and stakeholders of mining companies and their operations. <http://www.miningfacts.org/Communities/What-is-the-social-licence-to-operate/>



1.2. Sustainable secondary raw material management and a Circular Economy

Further needs for dialogue as regards sustainable secondary raw material management and a Circular Economy emerged in relation to:

- Identifying and realising potentials for recycling and substitution of raw materials (how much is technically, economically, environmentally optimal?);
- Using economic instruments and incentives to
 - Push boundaries of technological innovation within the physical limits of recycling and substitution
 - Improve collection and recycling systems, e.g. fostering R&D for improved sorting technology
 - Encourage consumers to return and discard properly of relevant products (such as WEEE)
 - Support green procurement in both public and private sectors (including procurement of long-life products, repaired or secondhand products and products made from recycled materials, and encouraging use of certified refurbishing and recycling facilities for end-of-life treatment of procured products);
- Providing supportive framework conditions through better putting (existing and, where needed, new) regulations to work
 - Making Extended Producer Responsibility schemes work (better)
 - Ensuring that high quality recycling operations which are needed to close the material loop are able to charge sufficient prices to enable them to operate in an economically viable way.
 - Integrating generic recyclability and durability criteria into eco-design requirements (i.e. designing products with a mind to enable them to be repaired and reused where possible or to be dismantled, deconstructed and their materials recycled)
 - Fostering free and fair trade of primary and secondary materials, i.e. that level playing field conditions are ensured for products, raw materials and waste (trade, import/export rules)
 - Facilitate shipments of waste to EU based recycling facilities which can be demonstrated to operate under high treatment standards (e.g. based on certification system)
 - Boosting collaborative initiatives to facilitate circular economy policies, e.g. Covenant of Mayors applied to circular economy;
- Fostering networks to exchange information to profit from e.g. industrial symbiosis;
- Raising awareness along the value chain to better collect and sort product streams.

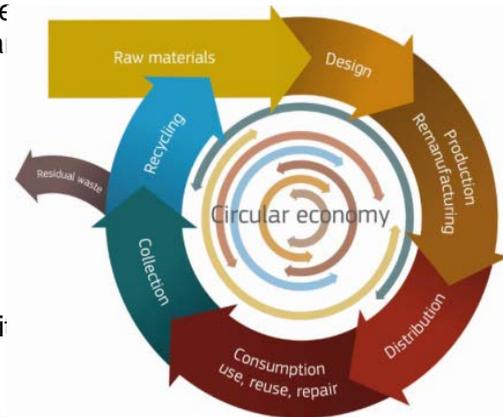


Fig. 2: Visualising a Circular Economy
(Source: European Commission 2014)



1.3. Eco-design

As material requirements and related social-ecological impacts are determined to a great extent during the design phase, dialogue needs to be fostered in relation to:

- Skills for better product design:
 - Providing the skills needed for environmentally friendly products (crossing disciplines, e.g. engineering and design, to ensure attractive, cost efficient, and resource efficient products);
- Product design:
 - Improving environmental product performance throughout the whole life cycle, e.g. designing for reparability, longevity, recycling, minimising waste
 - By design encouraging consumers to use products efficiently and correctly
 - Fostering documentation for and availability of spare parts;
- Product performance & support:
 - Making repairing attractive to young people, aiming at motivating consumer behaviour changes from disposing and buying new products to recycling and repair
 - Providing a supportive framework and incentives for eco-design on a macro-level: setting standards for spare parts and orienting public procurement to demand eco-designed products from the consumption side
 - Providing a supportive framework and incentives for eco-design on a micro-level: making top-level management aware of benefits of eco-design; incentivising eco-design of products, e.g. government paid scholarships for businesses or fostering collaborative platforms for funding and pooling of ideas
 - Creating specific product or services groups with different representatives along the value chain committed to pilot testing and implementing new business models
 - Providing consumers with relevant, targeted, sufficient and accessible information to enable more sustainable purchasing decisions.



Fig. 3: Fostering Eco-Design
(Source: EEB 2015)

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This project has received funding from the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration under grant agreement no 603509.



